The Problem

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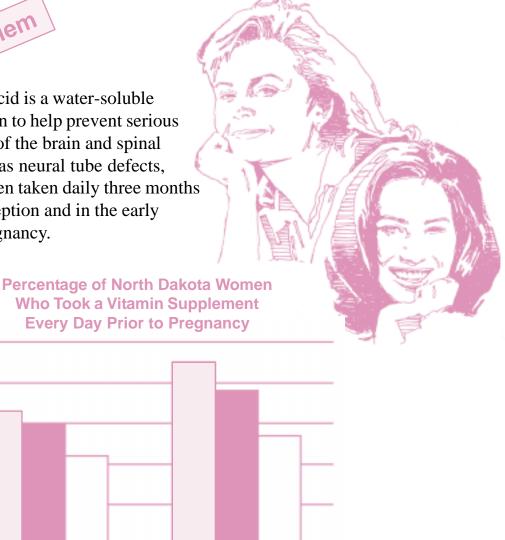
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Percentage

Folic acid is a water-soluble vitamin shown to help prevent serious birth defects of the brain and spinal cord (known as neural tube defects, or NTDs) when taken daily three months prior to conception and in the early weeks of pregnancy.

1996

Non-WIC



North Dakota Statistics

All Women

1999

☐ WIC

- According to North Dakota birth certificates, 55 children were born with cleft lip/palate, 74 with heart malformations and 17 with spina bifida/ meningocele between 1994 and 1998.
- According to the 1999 New Mother's Survey, the percentage of mothers who took a vitamin supplement every day prior to pregnancy increased from 30 percent in 1996 to 38 percent in 1999. This is still substantially lower than the Healthy People 2010 goal of 80 percent.
- In 1999, 13 percent of Native American mothers took a vitamin supplement every day prior to pregnancy, as compared to 40 percent of White mothers.

The Effects

Neural tube defects (NTDs) are the most common birth defects contributing to significant infant morbidity and mortality. Examples of NTDs include cleft lip/palate, certain heart defects, and limb defects. One-half to two-thirds of NTDs can be prevented by daily folic acid supplementation by women of reproductive age.

North Dakota Statistics

North Dakota has a higher rate of some congenital anomalies, or birth defects, than the United States overall. Between 1992 and 1996, the rate of infants born with heart malformation was 1.8 per 1,000 for North Dakota, as compared to 1.2 for the United States. The North Dakota rate per 1,000 births for cleft lip/palate was 1.7, compared to 0.8 for the United States.

Data Sources:

- National Center for Health Statistics
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- North Dakota
 Department of
 Health, Division
 of Vital Records
- 1999 New Mothers' Survey, North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Maternal and Child Health



The North Dakota Department of Health, Division of Maternal and Child Health, is addressing the issue of pre-pregnancy vitamin intake. MCH staff participate in the March of Dimes Folic Acid Task Force, which sponsors activities that promote pre-pregnancy vitamin intake. In addition, a number of MCH programs – including the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Program, the Optimal Pregnancy Outcome Program (OPOP) and the Family Planning Program – promote folic acid and pre-pregnancy vitamin intake.



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